

Development issues emerge at 2nd CCKT debate in Pottageville

By Mark Pavilons

Concerns about development and a need for affordable housing dominated the discussion at the second of two CCKT-sponsored political debates.

Concerned Citizens of King Township brought together eight candidates in Wards 2, 3, 4 and 6 at the Pottageville Lions hall for a lively discussion last Thursday. Growth, the relationship between developers and the Township, and the need for more affordable homes were discussed.

CCKT prepared two written questions, sent to candidates prior to the meeting.

The first asked who should take the lead in planning new subdivisions, and whether candidates can find solutions to housing needs.

Ward 6 candidate Roman Dyriw said council and staff have done a good job preserving greenspace and allowing development.

Council should look at the long-term continuity of all the development and collaborate with developers who have a knowledge of the marketplace. While the trend is for luxury homes, the model seems to be working since they are all selling out.

Incumbent Avia Eek said King is taking the lead, implementing various policies and using our own Sustainability Plan as a guide.

She admitted there's a need for a variety of housing stock. Just as the ICSP relied on public input, so too does the Official Plan review, which will contain valuable tools for future direction. She noted York Region has created a committee that is reviewing affordable housing across the region.

Incumbent Ward 4 Councillor Bill Cober said the planning process is complex and the municipality has to follow the rules laid out in the King's OP, York's OP and the provincial Places to Growth legislation. Council does set a clear vision and diversified housing options have started to appear in King. It's a matter of meeting both community needs and market demands.

Candidate Mary Asselstine said intensification is spelled out in urban areas and citizens are telling her they want more affordable homes. The trick is finding a balance and there needs to be more dialogue.

Ward 2 candidate Sherry Draisey said she wants to remain in King in the coming years. Along with offering condos, we have to solve our transportation problems and provide better transit options for seniors as well.

Incumbent David Boyd admitted a broader housing stock is integral to King and we're in a very exciting time. He urged the public to get involved in the OP review as this is the essential framework that will guide staff for the next decade.

King is like Forest Hill, noted Ward 3 candidate Jakob Schneider. "We pay the price to live here," he said, noting houses are becoming more energy efficient. He does support the creation of more seniors' housing.

Candidate Geoff Simpson said there's a need for more housing options. Attracting investment to King is vital to providing housing and he will work with staff to encourage future development to head in that direction.

The candidates were asked about their availability for the role as councillor, and their volunteer desires.

Asselstine said she's been on countless committees and organizations that have helped shape her community. Volunteering, she stressed, makes the community better and she's built many strong partnerships over the years. She sees the role of councillor as an advocate and she'll devote all of her time to the job. She's interested in the Sustainability Committee and Heritage Advisory Committee at the Township.

Cober noted he's been able to efficiently carry out his constituency work while working as a principal. He's proven his dedication and over the years on council, and he's served on numerous boards and committees.

Boyd said his schedule is flexible as a firefighter and he firmly believes that "life is about community." He's fully involved and knows what's required as councillor. He also boasts a 100% attendance record at council. He's involved in community events in Nobleton and also coaches hockey.

Draisey runs her own home-based business and has a very flexible schedule to serve.

Simpson, an IT professional, also has a lot of flexibility with his time.

He's served on several community organizations, including CCKT and the Food Bank. He would be interested in serving on the HAC, Sustainability Committee and library board.

Schneider serves on King's Accessibility Advisory Committee and York Federation of Agriculture. He's also a volunteer firefighter in King. He vows to remain "connected" and available 24/7.

Eek, who operates a Holland Marsh farm with her husband, notes her role as councillor is her top priority. For her, the job is not part-time and she's served on many committees and attends all local events. Her personal motto is "being present and speaking up."

Given his concerns with the Holland Marsh Drainage Board, Dyriw said that's one organization he would get involved in. He's a

Marsh farmer as well, and he has scaled back his operation to free up his time.

One resident asked the candidates how they would balance greenspace with sustainable development.

Cober noted the OP will guide the future vision and direction of King and he urged the public to get involved in 2019 during consultation sessions.

Asselstine said the Township is governed by various planning documents and provincial legislation already protects the greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine. Growth is limited to our urban centres.

Boyd said under the Sustainability Plan, all plans should be reflective of sustainable goals. The task at hand is to make sure the OP aligns with the Sustainability Plan.

Draisey said King's natural environment is the best defence against climate change and she will work hard to protect all of King's greenspace.

Dyriw noted King's destiny is ruled by the people and it has kept true to its spirit.

Eek said King's zoning bylaws for the rural areas are being revamped in 2019 and she's encouraging residents to provide their concerns and input.

Simpson said King will continue to limit growth to the urban areas and not infringe on the rural areas.

Schneider said development is taking place in King, but some areas will never see it. He vows to keep any development off of prime agricultural land.

Another resident asked candidates what they would do to upgrade many of King's sub-standard roads.

Simpson said many residents expressed the same concern at the door and he discovered they're split ? half want all roads paved, others don't. Some argue that once a rural road is paved, it will attract traffic and speeding will increase.

Schneider said council would have to weigh the pros and cons, and the costs of paving gravel roads.